



*Rayfield Reynolds*

# **INVENTOR, COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER, HISTORIAN88-year-old Rayfield Reynolds continues to assist community**

By Carole Brand | Posted: Wednesday, February 27, 2002 12:00 am

With strong hands that have molded wood into inventions and help mold children into responsible adults, Rayfield Reynolds from Elba insists he still has a lot to do in life.

As a well-known woodworker, Reynolds also uses his shop for the Reynolds Boys and Girls Job Research Development Team for youngsters each summerto learn the trade of woodworking and how to become responsible adults.

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However, no one on the board seemed to have any ideas on how to help the young people of the county.

Reynolds said he went home after a meeting one night and decided that it was up to him to do something to help. He began making wooden swings, cabinets, and any furniture that would go with a home, all the while enlisting the help of many youngsters in the community.

Reynolds said when the "grant man" returned to see his idea, he was elated at the fact that Reynolds had come up with an excellent way to instill a work ethic, a sense of pride, and a way to get youngsters busy during the summer. The money was presented to Pike, Coffee and Bullock counties. The funds allowed Reynolds to create the non-profit Reynolds Boys and Girls Job Research Development Team in Coffee that is still active today; a pallet and sawmill plant in Pike County; and in Bullock County, several houses went under construction. Reynolds said the grant was the first in 50 states to be used from HUD to create a job training program in the 1950s.

Today, more than 100 school-age students sign up each summer to be in the Job Research Training Program.



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" I like to think up ideas that people say can't be used or sold, but then I end up selling them and it's been a real success."

A recent venture Reynolds has had since last year is still in the making in the town of New Brockton.

In the 1930s, the Southland Peanut Company was located in New Brockton. The plant, according to Reynolds, made the "best tasting peanut butter in the United States" at the time. Reynolds worked in the plant but told the owner he thought he could improve the taste of the peanut butter if he would "just give me a try." Reynolds began experimenting with the various kinds of peanuts and developed a unique taste of peanut butter.

"We had seven trucks running day and night and had the number one tasting peanut butter in the entire United States," he said explaining that a choice in peanuts decided the taste.

"The plant was using number two peanuts and I changed to a number one grade that has a little husk on them. The husks keeps the moisture in the nut using a number one Spanish and a number one runnepeanut. When you mixed both together in the right combination, the peanut butter is the best you'll taste."

Reynolds donates the wooden swings and furniture he makes now to the town of New Brockton to sell to help raise funds for a peanut butter monument near the site where the plant was located.

New Brockton Mayor Charles Cole recently presented Reynolds with a proclamation recognizing Reynolds' contribution to the town.

"We appreciate everything Mr. Reynolds has done for the town and hopefully soon, we'll have the funds to construct a monument that everyone can enjoy and where the young people of the town can learn its history."